GREGORY W. SMITH (SBN 134385) CITY ATTORNEY LAW OFFICES OF GREGORY W. SMITH 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 345E 2012 JUN 14 PM 5: 04 Beverly Hills, California 90212 (310) 777-7894 Telephone: (213) 385-3400 (310) 777-7895 Telecopier: 5 CHRISTOPHER BRIZZOLARA (SBN 130304) 1528 16th Street 6 Santa Monica, California 90404 Telephone: (310) 394-6447 Telecopier: (310) 656-7701 Attorneys for Plaintiff WILLIAM TAYLOR UNLIMITED JURISDICTION 10 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 11 FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES 12 13 **CASE NO. BC 422 252** WILLIAM TAYLOR, 14 [Assigned to the Hon. John L. Segal, Plaintiff. Judge, Dept. "50"] 15 VS. 16 PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR CITY OF BURBANK and DOES 1 through ATTORNEY'S FEES; MEMORANDUM 17 100, inclusive, OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT; DECLARATIONS IN Defendants. 18 SUPPORT THEREOF 19 July 9, 2012 Date: 8:30 a.m. Time: 20 "50" Dept.: 21 [Filed concurrently with Declarations of Gregory W. Smith, Christopher 22 Brizzolara, Douglas Benedon, and 23 Selma Francia] 24 September 22, 2009 **Action Filed:** 25 March 5, 2012 Trial: 26 27 | / / / 28 PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR ATTORNEY'S FEES; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT

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TO THE COURT AND TO ALL PARTIES AND THEIR ATTORNEYS OF RECORD:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on July 9, 2012, at 8:30 a.m. in the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Central District, Department "50," located at 111 North Hill Street, Los Angeles, California 90012, Plaintiff WILLIAM TAYLOR ("Plaintiff") will and hereby do move for an award of attorneys' fees in the lodestar amount of at least \$876,532.50 plus an appropriate multiplier of not less than 2.0.

The grounds for the motion are that the Plaintiffs brought an action under the Fair Employment and Housing Act ("FEHA") for retaliation, that FEHA provides that the prevailing party may be entitled to attorneys fees incurred in bringing in such actions, that the Plaintiff was the prevailing party at the time of trial in this matter, and that the costs, risks, time consumption, and overall delay from the date of initial to the date of receiving payment inherent in this litigation make them extremely difficult to obtain qualified counsel to represent individuals such as Plaintiff herein.

The motion will be based on this Notice of Motion, the accompanying Memorandum of Points and Authorities, the Declarations of Gregory W. Smith, Christopher Brizzolara, Doug Benedon and Selma Francia, the Exhibits, the Court's file, and upon such further evidence and arguments as may be presented at time of the hearing of the motion.

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Dated: June 11, 2012

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Respectfully submitted,

LAW OFFICES OF GREGORY W. SMITH

By:

Attorne√s for Plaintiff WILLIAM TAYLOR

MEMORANDUM OF POINTS & AUTHORITIES

PLAINTIFF IS ENTITLED TO ATTORNEYS' FEES AS THE PREVAILING PARTY.

Plaintiff sued the City Burbank for FEHA and Labor Code section 1102.5 retaliation. Although *Labor Code* section 1102.5 does not permit an award of attorney's fees, the FEHA issues litigated in this case constituted 99% of work done on the entire case, and the 1102.5 action was related to the FEHA claims.

Plaintiff claimed he was subjected to FEHA retaliation for (1) reporting sexual harassment at the animal shelter, and (2) reporting discrimination of minority probationary employees. As the court will recall, the vast majority of the litigation in this case concerned Taylor's reporting discrimination of minority employees. Plaintiff also claimed he was subjected to *Labor Code* section 1102.5 retaliation for requesting the Chief of Police to bring in an outside agency to investigate a burglary which had occurred inside the police department. This aspect of the case took up less than one hour of testimony and only a one page document related to this claim was used to show that Taylor had in indeed made the request.

Taylor's complaint that the burglary should be taken to an outside agency was used to show that Taylor also wanted the Porto's internal affairs investigation to be taken to an outside agency. This evidence was used to impeach Stehr, and to show that Taylor had no motive to obstruct Porto's. This evidence was also used to support Taylor's FEHA claims because the evidence tended to show that Stehr was untruthful and that Taylor did not obstruct the Porto's investigation. If the "claims" are related, fees <u>must</u> reflect the overall level of success in the case. Full compensation may only be limited when there is only partial or limited success. *Thomas v. City of Tacoma* (9th Cir. 2005) 410 F3d 895;

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Consequently, If there is any reduction in hours on account of the *Labor Code* 1102.5 action, and Plaintiff believes no reduction is warranted, it should be minimal, and within the range of 2%.

Although the statute provides that the court "may" award fees, cases hold that a prevailing plaintiff is entitled to fees "absent circumstances that would render the award unjust." [See Stephens v. Coldwell Banker Comm'l Group, Inc. (1988) 199 CA3d 1394, 1406 (disapproved on other grounds in White v. Ultramar, Inc. (1999) 21 C4th 563); Horsford v. Board of Trustees of Calif. State Univ. (2005) 132 CA4th 359, 394.] As the prevailing parties, Plaintiff is therefore entitled to attorneys' fees and costs under the FEHA, pursuant to Government Code §12965(b).

II. PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEYS' FEES SHOULD BE CALCULATED USING THE LODESTAR METHOD

The U.S. Supreme Court has described the "lodestar" method as the "guiding light" of "fee-shifting jurisprudence," and has "established a 'strong presumption' that the lodestar represents the 'reasonable' fee ... " City of Burlington v. Dague (1992) 505 US 557, 562, 112 S.Ct. 2638, 2641.

The starting point in the attorney fee analysis is the lodestar figure, which is calculated using the *reasonable rate* for comparable legal services in the local community for non-contingent litigation of the same type, multiplied by the *reasonable number of hours spent* on the case. [Ketchum v. Moses (2001) 24 C4th 1122, 1131–1132, 104 CR2d 377, 384; Nichols v. City of Taft (2007) 155 CA4th 1233, 1242–1243, 66 CR3d 680, 687] It is irrelevant to the "lodestar" calculation whether the parties' fee agreement contemplates a fixed hourly rate or a contingency fee. [See Blanchard v. Bergeron (1989) 489 US 87,

At least in Civil Rights Act cases, "reasonable" prevailing party attorney fees (42 USC § 1988) may include a market rate award for *separately billed* paralegal services. "(I)f the prevailing practice in a given community were to bill paralegal time separately at market rates, fees awarded the attorney at market rates for attorney time would not be fully compensatory if the court refused to compensate hours billed by paralegals or did so only at 'cost.' " [*Missouri v. Jenkins by Agyei* (1989) 491 US 274, 286–288, 109 S.Ct. 2463, 2471]

A. The Number of Hours Reasonably Expended

The first step in the calculation of the lodestar is determining the number of hours reasonably expended in the litigation. Serrano v. Priest, (1971) 20 Cal.3d at 48; Crommie v. Public Utilities Comm'n (N.D. CA. 1994) 840 F.Supp. 719, 724. Hours reasonably expended include, but are not limited to: (1) investigating the facts and researching the law of the case; (2) interviewing and meetings with the client; (3) preparing, reviewing, and revising pleadings; (4) consulting with jury experts; (5) preparing and litigating the matter; (6) preparing for trial; (7) conducting the trial; (8) post trial motions; and (9) handling an appeal. Hensley v. Eckerhart (1983) 461 U.S. at 430, fn. 4; White v. City of Richmond, (1983) 713 F.2d at 460; Serrano v. Priest, supra, 20 Cal.3d at 48-49, fn. 23. The reasonable hours may also include fee-related services – i.e., time spent preparing and litigating the fee application. Hemmings v. Tidyman's Inc. (9th Cir. 2002) 285 F.3d 1174, 1200; Serrano v. Unruh, (1982) 32 Cal.3d at 639. Here, the hours expended by Plaintiff's counsel have been itemized in detailed fashion in the attached declarations.

In FEHA cases, the verified time statements of the attorneys are entitled to a presumption of credibility. In *Horsford, supra,* 132 Cal. App.4th 359, the court reversed

the order of a trial court regarding an attorneys fee award in a FEHA case where the trial court failed to decide the fee issue with a focus on providing an award of attorney fees reasonably designed to fully compensate Plaintiffs' attorneys for the services provided. The court found that the trial court abused its discretion in rejecting wholesale counsels' verified time records, stating that the verified time statements of the attorneys, as officers of the court, are entitled to a presumption of credence in the absence of a clear indication the records are erroneous. *Horsford*, *supra*, 132 Cal. App.4th 396 - 397.

The declarations supporting such time records and fee requests constitute "[s]worn testimony that, in fact, it took the time claimed" and "is evidence of considerable weight on the issue of the time required in the usual case." *Perkins v. Mobile Housing Board_*(11th Cir. 1988) 847 F.2d 735, 738. Here, Plaintiff's counsel verified time records are entitled to the same presumption of credibility.

B. <u>The Reasonable Hourly Rate</u>

In determining a reasonable rate for the attorney's services, courts usually consider:

- -the prevailing rate charged by attorneys of similar skill and experience for comparable legal services in the community;
- -the nature of the work performed; and
- -the attorney's customary billing rates.

Serrano v. Unruh (1982) 32 Cal.3d 621, 643; Bihun v. AT& T Information Systems, Inc. (1993) 13 Cal.App.4th 976, 997, disapproved on other grounds in Lakin v. Watkins Associated Industries (1993) 6 Cal.4th 644, 664; Kerr v. Screen Extras Guild, Inc. (9th Cir. 1975) 526 F.2d 67, 69, cert. denied 425 U.S. 951 (1976). Courts look at rates at the time of the prevailing party's fee application, rather than rates charged at the time the litigation

began. Gates v. Deukmejian (9th Cir. 1993) 987 F.2d 1392, 1406; Missouri v. Jenkins (1989) 491 U.S. 274, 282; Pennsylvania v. Delaware Valley Citizens' Counsel (1987) 483 U.S. 711, 716. See also, Anderson v. Director, Office of Workers Compensation Programs, 91 F.3d 1322, 1324 (9th Cir. 1996) (remanding matter to district court for "delay enhancement").

A reasonable hourly rate reflects the skill and experience of the lawyer, including any relevant areas of particular expertise and the nature of the work performed. Crommie, supra at 725, citing Serrano v. Priest, supra, 20 Cal.3d at 48-49. Market rates charged by attorneys of comparable skill and experience should be used to calculate fees even for attorneys who handle cases on a contingency basis and have no billing rate. Blanchard v. Bergeron (1989) 489 U.S. 87, 96, 109 S.Ct. 939, 946. Further, fees are not limited, as in a traditional tort contingency fee case, by the amount of the plaintiff's recovery. Blanchard v. Bergeron, id.

In *Horsford*, *supra*, 132 Cal. App.4th 398 - 399, the court found that the trial court erred in failing adequately to consider the propriety of a higher hourly rate for a higher priced employment specialist attorney, in order to accomplish the purposes of FEHA. The purpose of statutory attorney fee provisions is to provide financial incentives necessary for the private enforcement of important civil rights. If a potential defendant is so replete with resources as to potentially overwhelm non-specialist counsel, or if the non-specialist plaintiffs' bar has not the resources to engage in complex litigation on a contingency-fee basis, the public interest in the prosecution of meritorious civil rights cases requires that the financial incentives be adjusted to attract attorneys who are sufficient to the cause.

In Bihun v. AT&T Information Systems, Inc., supra, 13 Cal.App.4th at 997, attorneys fees in the amount of at the rate of \$450 per hour for a Los Angeles attorney in

a FEHA case were affirmed as reasonable based on counsel's "knowledge, skill, experience and reputation." This case was litigated over 20 years ago.

As set forth in his Declaration filed concurrently herewith, Mr. Smith is a highly experienced and accomplished employment law attorney with multiple substantial plaintiff's verdicts in excess of \$1,000,000. Mr. Smith is also a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates and has substantial amounts of jury trial experience. In addition, Mr. Smith was the attorney who handled the recent FEHA based decision of *McDonald*, *et al. v. AVCCD* in which the California Supreme Court agreed that the doctrine of equitable tolling applies to a FEHA complaint. Other cases in which he has obtained substantial verdicts have been affirmed on appeal. Mr. Smith seeks a reasonable hourly rate of \$600.00 an hour, a rate of only \$100.00 per hour more than was awarded and approved a decade ago. The hourly rates requested are substantiated by the multiple recent fee awards for Mr. Smith by both state and federal judges in the amount of \$500.00 an hour in FEHA cases. Mr. Smith spent a total of 727.6 hours through the conclusion of trial for Plaintiffs for a total of \$436,560.00.

As set forth in his Declaration filed concurrently herewith, Mr. Brizzolara is a highly experienced and accomplished employment law attorney with multiple substantial plaintiff's verdicts in excess of \$1,000,000. Mr. Brizzolara has been practicing for almost 30 years and has substantial jury trial experience. For most of his practice, Mr. Brizzolara defended attorneys in professional liability lawsuits and other claims. From that experience, he has had the opportunity to review and evaluate the attorney work product, legal services, and billing rates of numerous law firms and attorneys, including the attorney work product, legal services, and billing rates of numerous law firms and attorneys handling employment litigation and related issues in the Southern California

area. The bulk of the recent jury trials that he has tried as plaintiff's counsel as either lead counsel or trial co-counsel have resulted in jury verdicts in excess of one million dollars. He was selected as a Southern California Super Lawyer for each of the years 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 by Los Angeles Magazine and its associates. In 2009, he was inducted into the Million Dollar and Multi-Million Dollar Advocates Forums. Mr. Brizzolara seeks a reasonable hourly rate of \$600.00 an hour. Mr. Brizzolara spent a total of 590.1 hours through the conclusion of trial for Plaintiffs for a total of \$354,060.00.

Mr. Benedon's declaration sets forth that the reasonable value of his services is \$525.00 an hour. Mr. Benedon spent a total of 118.5 hours on appellate work prior to trial for a total of \$62,212,50.

Ms. Francia's declaration sets forth the reasonable value of her services at \$200.00 an hour. Ms. Francia spent a total 118.5 hours on this case for a total of \$23,700.00.

C. The Use of Multiple Counsel Was Appropriate

California courts have recognized that multiple counsel are permissible (and often advisable) when the demands of the case warrant more than one attorney. In such cases, some duplication of work is both expected and compensable. *California Common Cause v. Duffy* (1987) 200 Cal.App.3d 730, 753; *Citizens Against Rent Control v. City of Berkeley* (1986) 181 Cal.App.3d 213, 234. Reasonable hours may include time spent by more than one attorney on a particular issue or task. *Davis v. City & County of San Francisco*, (1992) 976 F.2d at 1544; *California Common Cause v. Duffy*, (1987) 200 Cal.App.3d at 753. See also *Bouman v. Block* (9th Cir. 1991) 940 F.2d 1211, 1236 ("lawyers often hire other lawyers to help them with specific issues in the case").

Plaintiff was and is entitled to have multiple attorneys working on this case given the amount of work it entailed. Notably, the City had two attorneys, sometimes more, and

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D. <u>Substantial Attorneys' Fees Awards In Comparable Feha Cases Have</u> Been Affirmed

California courts have previously consistently upheld the award of substantial amounts of attorneys' fees and costs in FEHA actions. (*Flannery v. Prentice* (2001) 26 Cal.4th 572 - \$1 million fee award in fees and expenses after the jury returned a verdict in favor of the plaintiff of only \$250,000; *Greene v. Dillingham* (2002) 101 Cal. App. 4th 418 - \$1,095,794.55 fee award remanded to the trial court with directions to consider whether to apply an additional fee enhancement for the contingent risk factor; *Weeks v. Baker & McKenzie* 1998) 63 Cal.App.4th 1128 - \$1,847,437.86 fee award; *Vo v. Las Virgenes Municipal Water District* (2000) 79 Cal.App.4th 440 - \$470,000 fee award upheld even though plaintiff only obtained a modest judgment of \$40,000, and only prevailed on only one of his three FEHA causes of action.)

III. A MULTIPLIER OF 2.0 OF THE LODESTAR IS APPROPRIATE

In *Ketchum v. Moses* (2001) 24 Cal.4th 1122, 1132, the California Supreme Court held that fee enhancement multipliers of 2 - 4 times are allowed under California law. The Court reasoned that:

"The purpose of a multiplier is to fix a fee at the fair market value for the particular action. In effect, the court determines, retrospectively whether the litigation involved a contingent risk, or required extraordinary legal skill justifying augmentation of the unadorned lodestar, in order to approximate the fair market rate for such services... the multiplier for contingent risk brings the financial incentive for attorneys enforcing important constitutional rights...into line with incentives they have to undertake claims for which they are paid on a fee-for services- basis."

The Court further noted that applying a fee enhancement does not inevitably result in a windfall for attorneys:

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Thus, the California Supreme Court clearly has indicated that the court's discretion in awarding attorney fees is, initially ("absent circumstances rendering the award unjust"), to be exercised so as to fully compensate counsel for the prevailing party for services reasonably provided to his or her client. The basis for the trial court's calculation must be the actual hours counsel has devoted to the case. Ketchum, supra, 24 Cal.4th at p. 1133.) Then the court must adjust the resulting fee to fulfill the statutory purpose of bringing "the financial incentives for attorneys enforcing important constitutional rights ... into line with incentives they have to undertake claims for which they are paid on a fee-forservice basis." Id. at p. 1132.)

Courts recognize that attorneys representing plaintiffs in employment cases usually work on a contingency fee basis. There is thus no set hourly rate chargeable to the client. California courts consider the contingency fee risk as a factor to enhance the lodestar amount where deemed appropriate to attract attorneys to cases of significant public interest and to compensate for the risk of loss present in contingency fee cases. Serrano, supra, 20 Cal.3d at 48; Ketchum, supra, 24 Cal.4th at 1137-1138. Ketchum cited to Serrano v. Priest (Serrano III) and provided a list of other cases where fee enhancements were allowed, including citation to the FEHA case of Weeks v. Baker McKenzie.

California courts may consider the contingency fee risk as a factor to enhance the lodestar amount where deemed appropriate to attract attorneys to cases of significant

public interest and to compensate for the risk of loss and delay in payment inherent in contingency fee cases. Horsford, supra, 132 Cal.App.4th at 359. It has long been recognized that the contingent and deferred nature of the fee award in a civil rights, FEHA, or other case with statutory attorney fees requires that the fee be adjusted in some manner to reflect the fact that the fair market value of legal services provided on a contingent fee basis is greater than the equivalent non-contingent hourly rate. Ketchum v. Moses, supra, 24 Cal.4th at pp. 1132-1133 - " 'A lawyer who both bears the risk of not being paid and provides legal services is not receiving the fair market value of his work if he is paid only for the second of these functions. If he is paid no more, competent counsel will be reluctant to accept fee award cases.' " (quoting with approval from Leubsdorf, The Contingency Factor in Attorney Fee Awards (1981) 90 Yale L.J. 473, 480.) The contingency adjustment may be made at the lodestar phase of the court's calculation or by applying a multiplier to the non-contingency lodestar calculation. Ketchum, supra, 24 Cal.4th at pp. 1133-1134.

Justice requires that plaintiff's attorney's fees be paid by defendant rather than plaintiff out of any recovery in the litigation (Press v. Lucky Stores, Inc., supra, 34 Cal.3d at 318-319.) Similarly, plaintiff's counsel should not have to look to their client, under a contingency fee agreement, to make up for any shortfall in compensation arising from the court's statutory fee award. Horsford v. the Board of Trustees of California State University, supra, 132 Cal. App.4th at 401. One of the purposes of FEHA is to "make plaintiff whole", that is, putting plaintiff where he would have been but for the employer's unlawful conduct, physically, financially, and emotionally. See, e.g., Cloud v. Western Atlas, Inc. (1999) 76 Cal. App. 4th 895, 909; Ca. Gov. Code § 12970(a); Commodore Home Systems, Inc. v. Sup.Ct. (Brown) (1982) 32 Cal.3d 211, 213; Ofsevit v. Trustees of

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Cal. State Univ. & Colleges (1978) 21 Cal.3d 763, 7769, fn. 14; Ca. Code of Regulations § 7286.9; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Monterey Chapter 2055 v. City of Salinas Fire Dept. (9th Cir. 1981) 654 F.2d 557, 559.

Here, to effectuate the purposes of FEHA, the attorneys' fees awarded to Plaintiff should be equivalent to the amount Plaintiff is required to pay counsel to prosecute his claims. All of the facts and circumstances in this matter justify a multiplier of 2.0.

- All counsel have a certain amount of expertise in litigating employment cases against public entities.
- The Plaintiff and his counsel were required to go to trial due to the fact that the City never offered a reasonable value to settle this matter.
- The attorneys represent the Plaintiff in this matter on a contingency basis and have taken a great risk given the amount of time involved and the costs advanced.
- Based on past experience, the City of Burbank will almost certainly appeal
 the judgment, a number of years will have passed from the date of the first
 filing until the Plaintiff and their counsel finally get paid, if at all.
- The trail was extremely complex.
- The City spent at least \$1.5 million litigating this case creating diversions and difficulties throughout the litigation of this matter.
- Plaintiff's counsel was forced to forgo other opportunities of employment because of the amount of time expended in this case.

As such, Plaintiff respectfully requests the Court to apply a multiplier of at least 2.0 in order to enhance the lodestar. Such a multiplier enhancement will also serve to reflect the factors of contingent risk, delay in payment, and other factors supporting a fee

enhancement in this action. **CONCLUSION** IV. For all of the foregoing reasons, Plaintiff requests that the Court grant this motion in its entirety and award Plaintiff's attorneys' fees in the amount of \$876,532.50. In addition, Plaintiff requests that the court enhance the attorneys' fees by a multiplier of 2.0 for a total fee of \$1,753,065.00. Respectfully submitted, LAW OFFICES OF GREGORY W. SMITH Dated: June 11, 2012 By: Attorneys for Plaintiff WILLIAM TAYLOR

1	PROOF OF SERVICE
2	STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
3	COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES)
4 5 6	I am employed in the County of Los Angeles, State of California. I am over the age of 18 years of age, and am not a party to the within action; my business address is 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 345E, Beverly Hills, California 90212.
7	On the date hereinbelow specified, I served the foregoing document, described as set forth below on the interested parties in this action by placing true copies thereof enclosed in sealed envelopes, at Beverly Hills, addressed as follows:
9	DATE OF SERVICE : June 11, 2012
10 11	DOCUMENT SERVED: PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR ATTORNEY'S FEES; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT; DECLARATIONS IN SUPPORT THEREOF
12	PARTIES SERVED : SEE ATTACHED SERVICE LIST.
131415	XXX (BY REGULAR MAIL) I caused such envelope(s) with postage thereon fully prepaid to be placed in the United States mail at Beverly Hills, California. I am "readily familiar" with firm's practice of collection and processing correspondence for mailing. It is deposited with U.S. postal service on that same day in the ordinary
16 17	course of business. I am aware that on motion of party served, service is presumed invalid if postal cancellation date or postage meter date is more than one day after date of deposit for mailing in affidavit.
18 19	XXX (BY ELECTRONIC MAIL) I caused such document to be electronically mailed to Christopher Brizzolara, Esq. at the following e-mail address: samorai@adelphia.net .
20 21	XXX (STATE) I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the above is true and correct.
22	(FEDERAL) I declare that I am employed in the office of a member of the bar of this court at whose direction the service was made.
23	EXECUTED at Beverly Hills, California on June 11, 2012.
2425	Selma I. Francia
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	-15- PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR ATTORNEY'S FEES; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT

SERVICE LIST

<u>WILLIAM TAYLOR v. CITY OF BURBANK</u> LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT CASE NO. BC 422 252

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